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## Third Committee

**Summary record of the 4th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 5 October 2004, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman:* Ms. Groux (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Switzerland)

## Contents

**Agenda item 93: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*)***

**Agenda item 94: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)***

**(a) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*)***

**(b) United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all (*continued*)***

**Agenda item 95: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*)***

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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*In the absence of Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Ms. Groux (Switzerland), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 93: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly** (*continued*) (A/59/115 and 120)

**Agenda item 94: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (*continued*) (A/59/73)

(a) **Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family** (*continued*) (A/59/176)

(b) **United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all** (*continued*) (A/59/76 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and A/59/267)

**Agenda item 95: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing** (*continued*) (A/59/164)

1. **Mr. Wali** (Nigeria) said that his Government wished to reaffirm its determination to implement the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. It recognized the importance of education in promoting social development, eradicating poverty and creating a healthy society. Its commitment to education had produced modest successes, particularly with respect to the enrolment of young girls. In order to meet the challenges in economic and social development, the Government had developed an empowerment and development strategy aimed at laying a foundation for sustainable socio-economic transformation and poverty eradication. Nigeria was committed to improving the quality of life of all its citizens, and wished to reaffirm its commitment to the objectives of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, as well as to the Madrid Declaration and Plan of Action. His Government had put in place policies that addressed the welfare of the elderly and aimed to mainstream them in policies as an instrument of socio-economic development.

2. With respect to the rights of persons with disabilities, plans were being implemented to ensure them equal access to social services, including training, rehabilitation and employment. His Government welcomed the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, as such a convention would do much to confirm the commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Nigeria respected its commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and youth development remained a key aspect of government policy.

3. With regard to the family, the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family provided an opportunity to focus on increased cooperation on family issues at all levels, and his Government had observed the anniversary through various activities aimed at promoting the family.

4. He called attention to paragraph 26 (c) of the Copenhagen Declaration (see document A/59/120, paras. 21 and 22), which recognized that while social development was a national responsibility, it also required the collective commitment and efforts of the international community. The New Partnership for Africa's Development was aimed at promoting such collective action, and Nigeria urged the international community and the United Nations to support African countries in accordance with that compact. It was essential for the United Nations and all stakeholders to ensure appropriate follow-up action to the World Summit for Social Development, the twenty-fourth special session and other international conferences with a view to achieving accelerated social development and implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

5. **Ms. Al-Motawa** (Qatar) said that Qatar's interest in the family unit as the basis of society was reflected in its Constitution and had been translated into State policies to preserve the family and provide support for its well-being. Initiatives aimed at empowering the family to adapt to change were encouraged, and the State had established the Supreme Council for Family Affairs responsible for all aspects of family life.

6. The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, currently being celebrated, offered opportunities to assess trends and propose changes to emphasize the vital role of the family in preserving societies. In preparation for the tenth anniversary, Qatar had established a national committee to draw up a programme of celebrations and had designated 15 April each year for celebrating the Qatari family. In November 2004, Qatar would host the Doha International Conference for the Family, which would reaffirm the urgent need to strengthen the family so that it could perform its vital role in society and to increase attention to the family at the national, regional and global levels.

7. The elderly occupied an important position in Qatari society and the State had created social institutions to provide pertinent services. Qatar would host the Doha International Conference on Ageing in April 2005 to create awareness of the need to care for the elderly, while underscoring their potential for participation in development and encouraging research and studies on care mechanisms.

8. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco), referring to the celebration in 2005 of the tenth anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration, noted that the Copenhagen Summit had agreed on measures to combat poverty, illiteracy and HIV/AIDS and to safeguard human rights, while strengthening democracy and good governance. Those undertakings had been further strengthened by the commitments made during the twenty-fourth special session and other major economic and social conferences held over the past decade. Nevertheless, despite the momentous efforts made by the United Nations and other international organizations, and by all the actors in the social and economic sectors, suffering continued, particularly for the peoples of developing countries. Throughout the world, 1.2 billion people still lived in abject poverty and many suffered from HIV/AIDS, particularly in Africa.

9. The international community should shoulder its responsibilities with greater resolve in order to meet the deadlines set. To ensure economic and social progress, the fight against poverty had to remain an all-round priority, and developing countries had to be able to benefit from the opportunities offered by globalization. Morocco had a policy of social promotion designed to fight poverty, improve health-care services, deal with unemployment, develop rural areas and provide basic services. Great importance was attached to strengthening human rights, democracy, gender equality and women's participation in all areas of life, since development could only be successful if all sectors of society were involved.

10. Morocco therefore attached particular importance to the question of persons with disabilities and was endeavouring to ensure that their basic rights were respected and that they were fully integrated into society. It was a member of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and had taken part in the Working Group that was drafting the convention. In July 2004, a national study on the disabled had been undertaken to better understand their needs; the results would be published in early 2005.

11. The United Nations Literacy Decade had focused on the need for greater efforts if the international community was to attain the respective Millennium Development Goals. Aware of the importance of education and literacy, Morocco had adopted a charter and reorganized services to ensure the best use of capacities in that area. It had also adopted a strategy to ensure that literacy would become a reality.

12. Morocco supported the role of the family as the core of society. Moreover, in January 2004, it had enacted a law to ensure gender equality and to fully integrate women into society.

13. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) noted that, over the years, countries had made particular efforts to implement the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Despite progress at the national and international levels, however, it would not be possible to attain all the goals.

14. Her delegation wished to highlight a few points in the report of the Commission for Social Development (E/2004/26). The new communication technologies had led to a more interdependent world, not merely with regard to economic and trade relations or the distribution of wealth, but also related to issues such as social interaction. Globalization and interdependence had the potential to provide numerous benefits. They could lead to better governance at a global level; for example, if well managed, a global market could benefit all and result in material progress and the alleviation of poverty. However, currently, globalization was creating resources that were not

distributed equally and had adversely affected some workers and communities, even in some developed countries. The new technologies had reduced a number of barriers; however, an extensive survey should be made of the impact of globalization on social issues.

15. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs had set up many advisory bureaux with a view to creating a healthy family environment for children. To strengthen the role of the family and raise awareness of its importance, the Government was providing benefits to all members of the family. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations were implementing projects to train family members in crafts and trades, and had established a professional training centre for school dropouts.

16. **Ms. García Matos** (Venezuela) said that her Government was committed to giving social development a primary role on the international agenda. Venezuela had been elected to the Commission for Social Development and intended to participate actively in all areas of its work. It had demonstrated its commitment through the submission of a draft resolution in the General Assembly and, within the Organization of American States, a proposal for the establishment of an international humanitarian fund to combat poverty and promote social development.

17. Venezuela was undergoing a transition towards a new social compact based on equality, shared responsibility and inclusion in the exercise of political, economic and social rights. So-called "social missions" had been established as strategic tools for the elimination of inequality, discrimination and poverty. A series of such missions in the field of education had led to a marked increase in the number of children enrolled in school, especially in rural areas. Adult-literacy programmes and a plan to ensure access for all citizens to secondary and university education were also the focus of social missions. Under the Constitution, equal rights were guaranteed to the elderly, and a number of programmes, including economic assistance, health care and vocational training, had been designed for them. The new policy of social inclusion was based on the belief that education, job creation, social investment and accessible public services would overcome poverty and discrimination. Venezuela supported the efforts to draft a convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which should reflect the interests of all disabled persons without distinction.

18. In order to resolve the social problems generated by neoliberalism and globalization, economic and financial resources must be provided in a stable and secure way without political conditions. A common strategy for interaction between the economic and social sectors was the only way to combat poverty.

19. **Mr. Melenevskyi** (Ukraine) said that the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had defined clear and ambitious objectives, but in the current reality of globalization, those objectives would not be achieved unless the Millennium Development Goals were implemented. The degree of involvement by the people in social development issues determined the legitimacy of policies in those areas. The people-centred model of development should be based on good economic performance, a high level of social protection, education and dialogue. Ukraine had just been elected to the Commission for Social Development for a term beginning in 2005 and looked forward to active participation.

20. The private sector played an important role in social development, and special attention should be given to the principles of the Global Compact (A/59/1, para. 292). The International Labour Organization (ILO) had done a great deal of useful work on a common approach to social development and partnerships. The effective management of globalization and its social dimension should be considered important components for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He drew attention to the conclusions of the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization (A/59/98-E/2004/79). Globalization was often viewed as divisive, yet coordinated measures aimed at reforming the global economic system and strengthening governance at the national level could redress the imbalances. Managing globalization required an integrated approach encompassing social, economic, employment and environmental policies with the full involvement of all stakeholders.

21. **Mr. Hyassat** (Jordan) said that his delegation agreed with the conclusions reached in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General

Assembly (A/59/120) on the reasons for the failure to achieve the desired results. The forthcoming ten-year review would help to focus on weaknesses and on ways to intensify implementation.

22. His delegation was concerned that rates of illiteracy were rising around the world, especially among women and girls, and supported efforts to enhance the activities of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012). It welcomed the progress made in implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and the efforts to involve the elderly in actions to increase their well-being. Jordan was also committed to the principle of equal rights for persons with disabilities and supported the negotiation of a convention. It also supported the inclusion of a separate item on disability in the Committee's agenda.

23. **Ms. Adjalova** (Azerbaijan) noted that economic development was a major factor in promoting social progress, but in order to sustain such development, measures to promote social development must become an integral element of the national development agenda. Azerbaijan believed that the primary goal of social development policy was to establish an effective social security and social services system for the whole population, regardless of age, race, gender or social status. Factors like education, employment, health care, support to youth and families and democratic institutions were essential. Extending social programmes to all sectors of the population, including women, the elderly and youth, was a key element in promoting social justice and cohesion

24. Azerbaijan was a member country of the Youth Employment Network established on an initiative of the Secretary-General, and remained committed to its objectives. Programmes for the development and support of the family also received priority. It welcomed the observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, which would draw renewed attention to family issues, policies and programmes. Given the importance Azerbaijan attached to the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, a pension bill was currently under consideration, along with measures to establish a system of social services for older people. It was also seeking to provide protection for persons with disabilities by strengthening their social status and creating job opportunities that would help them to achieve independence.

25. Efforts were being made to improve living standards for refugees and internally displaced persons in the seven regions of Azerbaijan where armed conflict had destroyed infrastructure and the means of production. Addressing the needs of those people exceeded the capacity of the country, which had an economy in transition. Funds were being allocated from the State Oil Fund to rebuild infrastructure, including education and health-care facilities, and to provide micro-credit for small and medium-sized enterprises.

26. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that, more than ever, the international community must emphasize social harmony in the countries of Africa by promoting a poverty-eradication policy based on voluntary action to eliminate youth unemployment, abandonment of the elderly, marginalization of persons with disabilities and discrimination in all its forms. Vulnerable groups were an integral part of society and should enjoy full status as active participants in national life. They also had a right to social and legal protection.

27. Senegal placed priority on education and youth employment, and therefore it welcomed the proclamation of the United Nations Literacy Decade, which embodied the objectives of the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000. Literacy was a challenge in many countries, and all sectors of society, from Governments to the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organizations and local communities, must join to meet that challenge.

28. He appealed to donors to consider the urgency of the situation and to honour their commitments to help to promote the well-being of the citizens of the global village.

29. **Ms. Abeysekera** (Sri Lanka) said that social development was one of the keys to the advancement of humanity, because it focused on people and targeted society's more vulnerable groups. Since the 1950s Sri Lanka had focused on ensuring that people had access to the essentials required for livelihood, often at the expense of economic growth, and had thus achieved remarkable advances in social development, particularly in education and health. As a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, her Government had established a committee to implement its programmes, under the Ministry of Social Welfare. It had also developed a social development management system to monitor progress, and had

organized a seminar on follow-up to the World Summit, as well as a national conference on strategies and orientation, in partnership with non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

30. The impact of market forces had increased her Government's responsibility for social development and the protection of the disadvantaged. Specific authorities were addressing the problems of resettlement and rehabilitation, and the Government had developed policies on disability, in line with the recommendations of the Summit, and on ageing, in line with the Madrid Plan of Action. The 2002 Act for the Protection of the Rights of the Elderly had enabled the elderly, for the first time, to seek legal redress from their children for neglect, and had led to the creation of village committees of elderly persons, which were responsible for organizing programmes and taking decisions. Their recommendations were then taken up by the National Council for the Elderly. The Government's actions were well supported by non-governmental organizations and religious groups. A private foundation had organized workshops for persons with disabilities. Her Government recognized the need for disaggregated data on disability and ageing, and the Ministry of Social Welfare was leading the country's efforts in that regard, with special focus on elderly women, who were more numerous than elderly men.

31. Efforts to alleviate social problems were made more difficult by the long years of conflict in her country and by the lack of funds. Sri Lanka welcomed the efforts to be made by the United Nations and the international community during the United Nations Literacy Decade and hoped that literacy and primary school enrolment would increase substantially. While welcoming the focus of the United Nations on people-centred social development and on the family as the nucleus of society, she noted that related policies and strategies could only succeed if they were constructed carefully and in a cost-effective manner.

32. **Mr. Limon** (Suriname) said that, in its national policy statement for the period 2000-2005, his Government had identified the development of education, health care, employment, social security and housing as its main priorities. National social policy was implemented in close cooperation with civil society, and special attention was given to the most disadvantaged groups. A social security system had been set up, programmes for health reform and low-income shelters were being implemented, and a housing plan would soon be launched. Moreover, a number of studies had been undertaken on poverty eradication, and the Government was working closely with the private sector and non-governmental organizations in that regard. It was important that vulnerable groups should participate in development. High priority was given to the promotion and protection of the rights of children and to the development of children and youth, and a bureau for the rights of the child had been reactivated in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Education was a key factor for achieving sustainable development, and his Government had formulated a programme for the development of human resources. His country firmly believed that progress in social development depended on international cooperation and on the implementation of commitments made at the major world summits.

33. With a view to marking the tenth anniversary of the World Summit, the Commission for Social Development would be reviewing implementation of its outcome, as well as of the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session. While reaffirming the commitments made by his country at the World Summit, he noted that much remained to be done to improve the social situation of many people in society. Implementation should be the focus of efforts to achieve social development, and the review process should therefore focus on shortfalls in that regard.

34. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that, despite the good intentions expressed at the World Summit, no meaningful change had taken place over the subsequent years, and in some cases conditions had worsened. The Horn of Africa, for example, had yet again been ravaged by famine. Meaningful change could occur only if there was a concerted effort to implement the various programmes adopted by the international community. His Government had taken steps to ensure that all its social and economic policies and programmes were informed by the need to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and were focused on people. His delegation subscribed to the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/59/120), to the effect that meaningful social progress could not be achieved without sustained economic development,

buttressed by stable economic conditions. It also supported the recommendations relating to the harmonization of the goals and objectives of social policies and the rationalization of national and international cooperation for development programmes.

35. While his Government shared the belief that each country was primarily responsible for its own socio-economic development, it also recognized the essential need for international partnership and cooperation to achieve social development goals. It therefore endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations for partnership between rich and poor countries in the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit and of the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, developed countries should increase their official development assistance to the agreed level of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, poor countries should be allowed to participate in decision-making in international economic affairs, including those of the World Trade Organization and measures should be taken to offset the negative effects of globalization. It was widely accepted that there was a direct link between peace and development, and the Horn of Africa had always been a classic example of the destructive effects of wars and conflicts. Eritrea's development agenda had always focused on poverty reduction. The Government had recently formulated an interim poverty reduction plan, in consultation with key stakeholders, and had also prepared a food security strategy. Both were key components of the country's national development strategy, which was people-centred and emphasized popular participation and gender equality.

36. **Archbishop Migliore** (Holy See) said that, although development in general was often the subject of debate at the United Nations, more should be said about social development in particular. Over the years, the forces of globalization had exacerbated the insecurities associated with poverty and vulnerability, and society's vulnerable groups had been sidelined to varying degrees. Economic progress must be accompanied by socio-political progress. Policy frameworks and development plans should create an environment that would enable all members of society to take charge of their own development. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the various United Nations declarations of the past decade, including the Copenhagen and Johannesburg Declarations. Social policies for the protection of vulnerable individuals could be effective only if they succeeded in strengthening natural social groups — small communities and the family — and generated a sense of responsibility in civil society towards vulnerable sectors. His delegation wished to emphasize the need for protection of the family, and had participated in celebrating the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. It was also actively involved in the current work to draft a convention on the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. That work must become the vehicle by which the concerns of disabled persons were taken into account, so that they could fully participate in the right to life.

*The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.*